

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend claims 1, 10 and 14, and cancel claims 4, 9, 12, 13 and 18. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a full-length leaf spring having a first end, a second end, and an intermediate section between the first and second ends, the first end pivotally connected to a small utility vehicle frame over an axle and the second end being detached from the small utility vehicle frame and the axle;  
a half-length leaf spring having a first end and a second end, the first end pivotally connected to the small utility vehicle frame;  
a spacer plate between the intermediate section of the full-length leaf spring and the second end of the half-length leaf spring, the spacer plate being the only connection point between the full-length leaf spring and the half-length leaf spring; the first end of the half-length leaf spring being spaced from the second end of the full-length leaf spring when the vehicle has a first load condition; the first end of the half-length leaf spring contacting the second end of the full-length leaf spring when the vehicle has a second load condition heavier than the first load condition.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a threaded connector extending between the intermediate section of the full-length leaf spring, the spacer plate, and the second end of the half-length leaf spring.
3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the full-length leaf spring is positioned below the half-length leaf spring.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising an axle mounted intermediate the full-length leaf spring and at the second end of the half-length leaf spring.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the spacer plate has a thickness less than either the thickness of the full-length leaf spring or the thickness of the half-length leaf spring.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the full-length leaf spring further comprises an eye at the first end thereof.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the half-length leaf spring further comprises an eye at the first end thereof.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a half-length leaf spring with a first end pivotally connected to a pair of plates connected to a vehicle frame member and a second end attached to an axle of the vehicle;  
a full-length leaf spring under the half-length leaf spring with a first end pivotally connected to a vehicle frame member and a second end detached from the vehicle frame;  
the first end of the half-length leaf spring being spaced from the second end of the full-length leaf spring in a first load condition, the first end of the half length leaf spring ~~having a first end~~ contacting the second end of the full-length leaf spring in a second load condition heavier than the first load condition.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 further comprising a spacer plate between the half-length leaf spring and the full-length leaf spring.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a dual rate leaf spring suspension supporting a vehicle frame over an axle, the suspension having a first leaf spring and a second leaf spring, the first leaf spring being longer than the second leaf spring, each of the first and second leaf springs having one eye pivotally connected to a small utility vehicle frame, the first leaf spring and the second leaf spring having only one connection point therebetween, the connection point being directly above the axle, the first leaf spring having one end that is unattached to the frame or axle.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising a spacer plate between the first leaf spring and the second leaf spring.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first leaf spring is below the second leaf spring.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the connection point is intermediate the first leaf spring and at one end of the second leaf spring.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first leaf spring is at least twice the length of the second leaf spring.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the second leaf spring has an end that is spaced from the first leaf spring in an unloaded condition.